1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

342 592 Mrs. Katel[7] was both unhappy and unpopular in her husband's community, and ran away for refuge to the Mandal who had brought her up. Her husband Katel followed her, and asked the Mandal's permission to settle in Lingthem; this was given and he was provided with land on which to build a house and which he could clear for cultivation. During the period when these four houses were built an equal number fell into decay either through family lines dying out, or through households amalgamating. Thus Tobgé, a young married man, all of whose family had died, had abandoned his house to go and live with Jiroong, who was his father's youngest brother.

According to the oldest inhabitants the number of houses increased very greatly in the second half of the nineteenth century. Ninety-year-old Serving, who was almost in his dotage, said that when he was a child there were only four houses in Lingthem; and Kahlyeu, born in 1860, says that in his childhood there were about twelve households. Kahlyeu ascribes the increase to the fact that in those days families were larger and split up as the sons grew older; but it seems probable that the indirect pacification after 1860 made possible a considerable increase in the number of permanently settled inhabitants.

● 173 According to Kahlyeu—and the tradition is supported by others—until about the beginning of the seventeenth century the Lepchas were entirely nomadic, only building temporary mud huts, and travelling about the forests, living on such animals they could kill, and the wild plants, of which the Lepchas have considerable know-
[824] ledge, for they know the edible (but not, as European tradition believes, the medicinal) properties of nearly every tree and plant. Iron for knives, Kahlyeu says, was introduced in the time of his father's grandfather, that is to say in the first half of the eighteenth

[551] [7] Some objection may be taken to my referring to married women as Mrs. X. Among the Lepchas married women are never named, and there are three different methods of referring to them: mother of A, wife of B, or woman from C, that order representing the frequency of usage. Thus Mrs. Tafoor is usually called Chimpet-mu (mother of Chimpet, her eldest son), less often Tafoor-veu (wife of Tafoor), or Panung-mu (woman from Panung). 'Mother of A' seems to me unnecessarily confusing, and since, in nine cases out of ten, a married woman owes her presence in the community to the fact that she is married to her husband, I have found it most convenient consistently to refer to married women as 'wife of X', or, in the English form 'Mrs. X', since this term seems to me to approach nearest to the cultural reality.

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

●173 century; about a generation later the Lepchas started living in permanent houses and were able to hold or increase their stock of domestic animals. Private property in land must have developed somewhat later; according to native tradition the land below the monastery—that is to say the more protected valley ground—has been divided into private property from time immemorial, but the higher ground was common property and was acquired and cleared as was wanted. At the time of Kahlyeu's father—that is to say about 1840—this ground too was divided up, and today all cultivatable ground is privately owned. Kahlyeu also said that until about 120 years ago only millet was cultivated, and not dry rice; but this seems to me improbable in view of the fact that the religious observances[8] are much more concerned with dry rice, than with millet or any other crop.

342 777 When new houses are made they are always built in the late autumn months, after the gathering of the harvest. This date is dictated by two reasons; at no other period would people have sufficient leisure and other dates would be ill-omened. The intending builder gathers materials for some months beforehand. The site of a new house is decided by a number of metaphysical considerations.

[179] First of all there is a lamaist book called Sachet Zai Putta which contains general rules of a very minute nature, indicating what sites are lucky, and what unlucky. This book is said to have been composed by four Gods who gathered together at Gyakar (perhaps Benares) to compile rules so that people should know which sites are good and which bad, which fruitful and which barren, where children can be born, and where they cannot. The following is a small selection of these very detailed regulations:

'A good site is, if there is a mountain to the south and below a slope. It is good if there is a stream on either side of the slope and trees in front. It is good if there is an outcrop of rock to the east and a flat plain to the west and a water fall opposite. Roads from east and north are good, but those from south and west should be avoided as they are used by Deut *moong* (fever devil). If there is a tree to the north directly below the house it should never be cut down; if, however, there is one to the south directly above it, it should be cut, or, if it be too big to cut down, a knife or some other piece of iron should be stuck into it. If the earth on which the

[8] See Chapter Nine. It is probable that millet was historically the earlier crop: what I question is the date of the introduction of dry rice.

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

CHAPTER 3

A Strange Mixture of Fact and Fiction: being a Brief History of Sikkim

161 SIKKIM has a population of close on 110,000, of whom 25,780 are said to be Lepchas of one sort or another; but this figure does not distinguish the very large number of men who have intermarried with women of other tribes and whose offspring are accordingly no longer to be reckoned as pure Lepchas. There are no accurate figures available of the total pure Lepcha population of Sikkim, but I imagine it to be somewhere in the neighbourhood of 13,000. What can be said, however, without fear of contradiction, is that this number is steadily decreasing year by year. The reasons for this are at present not clear to me; but I believe the principal cause to be contact of the easy-going and extremely non-materialistic Lepchas with the excessively virile, more thrifty and individualistic Gurkhas. The latter, finding insufficient land in their own country, are ever seeking for fresh places in which to settle; and during the process the Lepchas have been to a great extent absorbed or at least driven further and further into the hills. The settlement of Gurkhas and others in Sikkim is now controlled; but the Lepchas have already decreased to such an extent that legislation can now do no more than retard their complete extinction, that is, as a separate tribe, for a [144 few years longer. They claim to be the original inhabitants 197] of Sikkim. They are of Mongoloid appearance and speak a language which belongs to the Tibeto-Burman group.

● 173 The early history of Sikkim is mainly based on Lepcha 197 oral tradition, but the reigning family seems to have been from the first Tibetan. The Tibetan form of Buddhism, generally known as Lamaism, is believed to have been

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

introduced into the country about the middle of the seventeenth century by Lha-Tsun Ch'em-Bo, the patron saint of Sikkim.

Lha-Tsun is so intimately connected with the local form of Lamaism, figures so frequently in the strange hotch-potch of fact and fiction that passes for history, that it is essential to give some details of his life, so far as they are known.

Lha-Tsun Ch'em-Bo is a Tibetan title meaning "The great reverend god." His ordinary religious name is Kun-zan num-gye, or "The entirely victorious essence of goodness"; but he is also known by the title of Lha-tsun num kha Jig-may, or "the reverend god who fears not the sky." This is with reference to his alleged power of flying. He has yet another name, being sometimes referred to as Kusho Dsog-ch'en Ch'em-bo, or "The great and honourable Dsog-ch'en," the latter part of which name means literally "The great end," this being the technical name for the particular system of mysticism practised by the Nin-ma-pa sect, of which he was a member. Kusho means merely "the honourable," and is the title by which all persons of position are addressed in Tibet.

He was born in the fire-bird year of the tenth of the sixty-year cycles, corresponding to A.D. 1595, in the district of Kongbu, in south-eastern Tibet. Having spent many years in various monasteries and in travelling through Tibet and Sikkim, he eventually arrived in Lhasa in 1648, where he obtained such repute by his learning that he attracted the favourable notice of one Nag-wan, the greatest of the Grand Lamas, who shortly afterwards became the first of the so-called Dalai Lamas. Indeed, it is said that it was mainly through the special instructions given by Lha-tsun to the Grand Lama that the latter was so favourably treated by the Emperor of China and confirmed in the temporal rule of Tibet.

The detailed account of the saint's meeting with Nag-wan is worth citing as an example of the curious blend of the crude and the marvellous, of which most of these indigenous narratives are composed.

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

followed by the rapid development of the country. Settlers from Nepal flocked in, and the population, which in 1891 was returned at 30,458, had grown to 59,014 ten years later; an increase of 93.7 per cent." /75

The story of the Nepalese invasion is still known by most of the older people. This is the version told me by the Mandal of Lingtem, who was given it by his father: /73 ●

In olden days the Maharaja of Sikkim lived in Fyung Di. One day his chief minister, who was also a famous Lama, said to him: "Your Highness; war is undoubtedly coming before long, so let us get away with our possessions while there is still time." To this, however, the King replied: "What do you, a mere Tibetan, know of war or other affairs of state? Even if war does come, cannot I and my seven sons defeat with ease any paltry Gurkha army that may come to attack us?" But the minister, whose name was Lha-Tsun Ch'em-Bo,* was not convinced, and taking leave of the King he gathered together his considerable possessions and set off towards the Chumbi Valley. Shortly after his departure news arrived that the Gurkha army was approaching the capital; and even before it reached Fyung Di it had already inflicted several defeats on the peace-loving Lepchas. The Queen and her sons implored the King to flee; but he was adamant and remained alone on guard. He stood with his shield in one hand and a drawn sword in the other, and threatened to cut down anyone who dared to approach him. But his six grown-up sons were more prudent, and decided to set off on their own. The Queen remained behind with her husband, and it was only when the invading army had already reached the outskirts of the town that the King at last acceded to his wife's entreaties. They hurried off just as they were; the palace was left open and nothing was even

* Lha-Tsun Ch'em-Bo must have been dead for nearly two hundred years when the Nepal war took place; but, as I have already noted, Sikkim history is a mixture of fact and fiction, and the Lepcha likes to associate the patron saint of his country with every important happening. He will be found to figure in nearly every story of this sort; if not in person, then in a reincarnated form.

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

173 locked up. After the two of them had gone a mile or so from the palace, the Queen suddenly remembered that she had left her youngest son, a baby in arms, behind. She went back alone, snatched up the child, and was preparing to leave when she suddenly heard a crash behind her. She turned round to see what had happened and at once noticed that the mask of Lord Konchen had fallen to the ground. She picked it up, put it in her bosom with the baby and hurried away, rejoining the King shortly after. It is for this reason that Konchen is now worshipped by the Maharaja of Sikkim as a very special deity.

After a long and weary march the King and Queen came to Kabi, a small village in the vicinity of the Penlong La. In the meanwhile the Gurkhas had taken possession of Fyung Di and had plundered the palace, stealing even the gold and silver sacred images, of which there were many. There were also copies of the *Kangyur* and *Tengyur*. These were unlike ordinary books in that they were printed entirely in letters of the purest gold. The Gurkhas took all these books outside, piled them on a large flat stone, and set fire to them. When the embers had died down the gold was collected and from each volume a lump the size of a hen's egg was obtained. All this loot the Gurkhas sent off to Mikrum Di, which was the principal palace in Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal. All the Lepchas were very frightened of the conquering Gurkhas, especially when they saw the palace stripped of all its treasures. They saw that there was nothing they could do to stem the tide, and so they moved off into the hills, into the most remote corners and valleys they could find. They took with them their cattle and as much of the property as they could carry, hoping that the Gurkhas would never discover their hiding places. Most of them went to the headwaters of the Rangnyit river.

Now the King did not know what to do, as although the Gurkhas seemed to have retired for the moment, so also had his own people, and a great part of the country in consequence became entirely empty. Eventually he decided to take his wife

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

and children with him and to ask the King of Tibet for refuge; for although his Queen was a Lepcha, the King himself was a pure Tibetan. Later on the Gurkhas returned and swarmed once more all over Sikkim. Because of this the Lepchas were driven into still more remote places. Some of these were so inaccessible that the people had to live entirely on the produce of the jungle, eating even ferns. The Gurkhas had brought with them a huge mill made of lead, from which they cut off bits to make ammunition for their weapons. They carried this mill as far as Rungjyol (a place in the Talung Valley, on the other side of the river from Lingtem), but it was too much of a burden for them to carry it further. Its remains were still in existence until a few generations ago, but it has now all been used up by the local people. The Gurkhas advanced as far as Sakyong Pantung, where they buried their swords and shields to mark what was now the boundary of their country.

The Lepchas now began to leave their hiding places and they all collected together in order to decide on a plan of campaign. It was arranged to send a deputation to the Maharaja, who was still in Tibet, and to ask him what they should do. The King, however, was unable to give them an answer and told them to do whatever they thought best. After this the Lepchas gathered above Sakyong Pantung; and by degrees drove the Gurkhas back by stoning them. They could make no reply, since they had buried all their arms. The Gurkhas were gradually pushed lower and lower down the valley until eventually they reached the junction of the two rivers. Here the confusion was so great that the river became choked with bodies and a lake formed above the dam of corpses: but still a few desperate Gurkhas managed to hold on to the position. That night all the Lepchas went up on to the surrounding hills, where they set light to the bamboo forest, which burnt with a popping noise. This terrified the Gurkhas, who thought the noise was that of fire-arms being discharged. At the same time the Lepchas prepared stakes of pointed cane, lighted them and discharged them from their

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

173 bows. The Gurkhas were by now thoroughly terrified and their remnants retired in disorder. The Maharaja was thereupon summoned from Tibet and as soon as he arrived the country was finally cleared of the marauding Gurkhas, and the boundary fixed. It ran along the line Niu-oong-Munshi-oong-Du-Du Kosi (presumably the Dudh Kosi) and Tambar Kosi. For a long time the Maharaja used to collect taxes in this area, but no longer does so, as it is now part of Nepal. After settling the boundary, the Maharaja returned to Fyung Di, but he found only the walls of his place still standing. He summoned many Lamas and asked them to call the Lord Konchen, to whom a bullock was first sacrificed. At the same time all the other gods were also summoned. Konchen was told that since his was the greatest influence in Sikkim he must help in getting revenge upon the Gurkhas, who had wrought such terrible destruction all over the country. He agreed to help and said he would send devils to destroy Nepal. One year later the Mikrum Di, in which all the stolen treasure was stored, was engulfed in a rising lake. All the occupants of the palace, including the then King of Nepal, were drowned, but it is said that the palace is still visible beneath the water. Ever since that day half the wealth of Sikkim has remained buried in the lake and the other half is stored in Tulung Monastery, where it was put by Lha-Tsun-Ch'em-Bo. It cannot be touched because Lha-Tsun left it in the charge of certain devils who would immediately take their revenge if anyone tried to touch it. It is for this reason that the Maharaja can make no use of it. No one has ever seen the treasure, but the boxes in which it is stored are still visible in Talung. It is said that the people of Nepal are still very afraid of the Lepchas, but actually, so said the Mandal: "the only thing Lepchas are any good at nowadays is carrying other people's loads!"

175 The settlement of Gurkhas in Sikkim is no new thing, and I imagine there must have been a number already there even before the war with Nepal. Their coming has not been altogether a bad thing, for neither the Lepcha, still less the

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

Tibetan, is at heart an agriculturist. Left to himself the 175
Lepcha is but a poor cultivator, and he had need of the Gurkhas to show him how to make the best use of his land. The Gurkha needed land, the Lepcha instruction; but probably no one realised how this give and take would end. However it was, a line has now been fixed beyond which Gurkhas may not acquire land; and none but Lepchas may settle in Jongu. But to continue the Mandal's story:

Many, many years ago, in the time of Raja Pun-tsok, there 173
was a man named Laso Kaji, who thought he would like to possess the district of Jongu, which is one of the most fertile parts of Sikkim. He went to the Raja and told him of his desire, saying that the land he wanted was only a tiny piece, stony and unfertile. Since the Raja had not himself travelled, and indeed did not even know the names of his villages, he readily consented, at which Laso departed happy. Now the Raja had a favourite minister whose name was Yuk Ting Takshay, and this man he trusted greatly. He badly wanted some special poison plants, called *Sumdo* and *Vim-pot*, which were to be found only high up in the mountains, and which had the peculiar quality at night of shining like bright flames. They were extremely rare, and their possession brought with it the acquisition of every kind of riches. Yuk Ting Takshay set off on his quest, taking with him vast quantities of gold and silver, many copper vessels, a huge leaden mill, ivory, and a large assortment of such musical instruments as are used in monasteries. There was also much rich clothing, of the sort worn only by rajas and other great men. All these things he brought from Fyung Di, where the capital was in those days.

In the course of his travels Yuk Ting Takshay came to a place called Navar Hlo, which he reached just as night was falling. This place was the home of many devils, who refused to let him continue. But when they saw all the beautiful treasure he had brought they agreed to let him pass provided he left it behind. This he did; and in return the devils turned night into day, so that the minister need not

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

173 delay. All this treasure, which was meant as an offering to the gods, is said to be still concealed in a cave above the Talung: and as for the lead, it is still there, but has much decreased since the local people, in the course of generations, have been gradually whittling it away. The next day Yuk Ting Takshay got to a place called Toong Voong, and, arrived there, he asked to whom it belonged. "It is the property of Laso Kaji," they told him: and as he proceeded on his way he received always the same answer. At this time Laso Kaji himself was living in a house on the site of Jiroong's present home, and when Yuk Ting Takshay came to it he turned him out, whereupon he fled over the hills to Parfok, where he lived the whole of the following year, unbeknown to the authorities. Meanwhile Yuk Ting Takshay went on with his search and in due course returned to Fyung Di, when he told the Raja what he had seen. He told him how he had been deceived by Laso Kaji, to whom, unknowingly, he had ceded an immense track of land. When he had considered the story the Raja decided to send Yuk Ting Takshay back again in order to take possession of the land. Now below Mangen, near the present bridge, there is a hot spring called Rong Rong Tcha Chu, and it was here that Yuk Ting Takshay decided to camp. He had with him many servants, and these soon got into the way of going across the river to steal manioc and other plants. When the people on the far side of the river heard of this they went and complained to Laso Kaji, who was still living in Parfok, and whom they regarded as their ruler. He asked who these thieves were, but they could not tell him. He told them, however, to send twelve men across in the dead of night in order to kill as many of the thieves as they could. Before they could put their plan into action Yuk Ting Takshay's men got wind of their approach and started to run away, so that when they reached the camp they found only Yuk Ting Takshay. He was sitting alone in the hot spring, enjoying its warmth, and at the same time shouting to his men to come back and help him. Yuk Ting Takshay asked the men who

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

they were, and they told him they had been sent by Laso 173
Kaji with orders to kill both him and his men. Yuk Ting Takshay was very angry, and single-handed though he was, he managed to disarm all of Laso's men. Later on, when the row had somewhat subsided, Yuk Ting Takshay's followers returned, and the next morning he sent them across the river to find out what Laso Kaji meant. Laso was somewhat perplexed, as he had no idea of whom he had attacked. He decided to slaughter a bullock and sent it across as something in the nature of a peace offering. At the same time he sent word apologising for what he had done, and particularly asked Yuk Ting Takshay not to let the Raja know what had happened, for he feared for his life. Yuk Ting Takshay accepted the carcass and agreed to do what was asked of him, but at the same time he ordered Laso Kaji to leave the district, which he did. He went off no one knows where, but his descendants are now living in Namchi. From that day Jongu was taken over by the Raja and has formed part of the private estate ever since.

Laso Kaji's descendants seem to have kept up the family 175
tradition of lawlessness, for in 1861 we find the then holder of the title opposing a British force.

Writing on the 20th February from Rungpodon, on the banks of the Teesta, Colonel Gawler describes his meeting with him:

"I considered it expedient that our point for crossing the Teesta should be within, at most, three days' march of Tumloong (to obviate our being obliged to form any large depots on the other side of the river); but, as this would necessitate a march for some distance up the right bank from Temi, I determined on cutting all bridges below the point I might select, so that neither my force nor convoys might be liable to annoyance during what would be a flank march.

"I therefore started the next morning, an hour before daylight, to search for bridges, and about nine o'clock found a large one at the Linsing Ghat, a few miles above the Took Ghat. On approaching it I was met by three natives bearing

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

159 complained of pains in the heart and said that they were
753 caused by a demon known as Shuk-Sor Mung. When this Mung attacks animals they always die; but in the case of
[782] human beings their evil can be averted by the sacrifice of two chickens, one white and one speckled, together with the usual offerings of grain. Heart trouble seems in some way to be connected with poison. This is the story Karma gave me:

●173 About sixty years ago there were two brothers living in the
683 district named Tuk-Shyok and Sun-Kyon. They were supernaturals, and were in the habit of killing people by means of poison. Nobody would ever visit them; nor were they allowed to attend any of the local ceremonies. It was believed that they had caused the death of a number of people, and for this reason a meeting was called at which it was decided to kill them. Their mother, whose name was Na-Sor, was a Mun; and as such had special powers. It was decided to lock the door upon the two brothers after they had gone to sleep one night and then set fire to the house. At the time this happened their mother was not living with them, but occupied a lone hut a short distance away. She, however, saw the house burning and ran to see what was happening. She first jumped on the fire and being a Mun was able to use her powers instantly to put it out. As soon as she had time to look around she found that her two sons were at the point of death: each with a vessel of poison clasped to his breast. Their life had almost ebbed away; their hearts were just beating and no more. The elder could barely speak; but he was able to summon up sufficient strength to tell his mother what had happened, after which he fell back gasping and died. The younger brother lingered on for three more days. As he lay dying he said to the Mun: "Mother! In our time we have poisoned many people; but, now we too must die. But you will still live on; and you are a Mun; you have powers denied to many."

Na-Sor understood what was expected of her, and after the second son's death she remained alone in meditation for

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

173 three whole nights. Higher up the valley there is a place
683 called Shuk, the home of many Mungs. From this place the mother called up the demon whose name was Sor; and told him in future to trouble all people. This was the revenge she took for the death of her only two sons.

787 If a person dreams that he sees a kite flying through the sky it is a clear indication that trouble is coming from Sor Mung. Karma says that the night before last his mother-in-law dreamt that she saw such a bird, which came and perched on the roof of the house. It was, therefore, not surprising that yesterday she complained of pains in her heart.

159 Karma is obsessed with poison, and would nearly always, sooner or later, bring the subject into the conversation. He has been Karbari for nearly three years and will soon hand over to another. His earliest memories are of having to do hard work. When he was about three years old his father's brother was being married. He remembers his mother being
[252] seated near the fire, preparing parched rice, and his father sitting a little way off, drying it. At that time Karma's father was unwell and could not attend the wedding; but he told his wife to go, and particularly asked her to bring him back a piece of liver, for which he had a fancy. On the evening of the wedding his mother went to the house where it was being held and remained there for some time, drinking and taking part in the feast. Karma remained at home. As his father was feeling unwell they had no food that night and went to lie down early. The house was very small and had but one room. Karma lay down on his father's left and his elder brother was on the right. After some time the father started to gasp for breath. Karma wondered what was the matter, and scrambling up, he looked into his father's face and asked him what had happened; but he did not reply. His brother was still sound asleep and so he shook him. He now noticed that his father's eyes were wide open and had a fixed staring expression.

The two boys did not know what to do: all the neighbours had gone down to the wedding, except one old woman who

7: Hooker D-5 (1849-1851) 1854
AK5 Lepcha AK5

Before proceeding to narrate my different expeditions into Sikkim and Nepal from Dorjiling, I shall give a sketch of the different peoples and races composing the heterogeneous population of Sikkim and the neighbouring mountains.

The Lepcha is the aboriginal inhabitant of Sikkim, and the prominent character in Dorjiling, where he undertakes all sorts of out-door employment. The race to which he belongs is a very singular one; markedly Mongolian in features, and a good deal too, by imitation, in habit; still he differs from his Tibetan prototype, though not so decidedly as from the Nepalese and Bhotanese, between whom he is hemmed into a narrow tract of mountain country, barely 60 miles in breadth. The Lepchas possess a tradition of the flood, during which a couple escaped to the top of a mountain (Tendong) near Dorjiling. The earliest traditions which they have of their history date no further back than some three hundred years, when they describe themselves as having been long-haired, half-clad savages. At about that period they were visited by Tibetans, who introduced Boodh worship, the platting of their hair into pig-tails, and very many of their own customs. Their physiognomy is however so Tibetan in its character, that it cannot be supposed that this was their earliest intercourse with the trans-nivean races: whether they may have wandered from beyond the snows before the spread of Boodhism and its civilisation, or whether they are a cross between the Tamulian of India and the Tibetan, has not been decided. Their language, though radically identical with Tibetan, differs from it in many important particulars. They, or at least some of their tribes, call themselves Rong, and Arratt, and their country Dijong: they once possessed a great part of East Nepal, as far west as the Tambur river, and at a still earlier period they penetrated as far west as the Arun river.

11:Hermanns M-5 (1951)1954
AK5 Lepcha AK5

CHAPTER III

THE MOUNTAIN TRIBES OF SIKKIM

A. The Lepchas

The Lapches or Lepchas are supposed to be the original inhabitants of Sikkim. They call themselves Rong; the Tibetans call them Mon, and the Bhutanese, Meri. The Mongoloid problem can best be studied through the Lepchas of the Southern Himalayas and hence they are dealt with more thoroughly.

According to one opinion the Lepchas are supposed to have come not from Tibet, but from the east of the mountains from Assam and Upper Burma.[22] Their own tradition, however, states that their original home was in the neighbourhood of the great mountain, Kang-chen-mdzod-lnga[23] the second highest mountain in the world. That is the Tibetan name and means the "Great Glacier of the Five Store-rooms." The Lepcha name for the mountain is, "King-tzum-song-bu." King-tzum means "Highest part of the forehead," song-bu means "the highest." Literally it means, "the highest over our head." This Lepcha name is reproduced phonetically by the Tibetans as "Kang-chen-mdzod-lnga," which has quite a different meaning. This snow-covered mountain has an important part to play as the habitat of the spirits. King-tzum-rum is the god of happiness; Rum-king-tzum is the god of fate.[24] From it the Lepchas derive the name Rong, by which they are known. Rong means "peak" or "mountain peak" and has the same significance as the word Arong.

Another tradition has it that the place of their origin is on the holy mountain Kailasa (Ti se) way up in Tibet. On the mountain is the stone Ne-long which bears the footprints of Buddha and of animals. The god, Pum-rum, protector of the hunters, lives there. Pum-rum is also another name for the Supreme God of the Lepchas as we shall soon see. The

22. J. C. White, Sikkim and Bhutan, London, 1909, p. 7.
23. Kangchenjunga, Fig. 17 & 18.
24. G. B. Mainwaring and A. Grünwedel, Dictionary of the Lepcha Language, Berlin 1898, 17a, 356 b.

11:Hermanns M-5 (1951)1954
AK5 Lepcha AK5

oldest homeland bears the name Damsang. We have here an inkling of the Tibetan Lama influence, which, as in Hindu tradition, links the original homeland with the holy district. Since the King-tzum-song-bu is very closely linked with the myths of the Lepchas we shall go more deeply into a study of it.

(a) MYTHS OF THE CREATION OF THE WORLD

The myths of the creation are of special importance. "Create" in the Lepcha language is called "ayit" or "it" in its abbreviated form. Another word for create is "de-bo." "It-rum" or "de-rum" means "god of creation"; "Rum" by itself means "god." "Pum-thing-rum" signifies the same. "Pum bo" means "Principal," "Chief," "God." The name "It-bo" or "It-bo-mu" is again taken from the creative action of god. Other names are, "Ta-she-thing," "Sa-dzug-rum." The latter are connected with the sun god and are used by some as the emblem of the Supreme God.

The following is the myth about creation: In ancient times Rum created a great expanse of water. Nothing else existed at the time. Then he created on the bed of the water the fish "ngo." Next he formed three pairs of deities who lay down crosswise on the fish. The first of the pairs were Rug-lu and Rug-lom, and after them were Mon-li and Rŏng-gul, Pŏ-ril and Pŏ-dong. These are three pairs of male and female deities. Over these were fashioned Sŏm-li and Sŏm-nag-mŏn-mu, a couple who as man and wife are supposed to belong to the human race. They all carried the earth which rested on them in the form of a dish. The slightest movement of the fish resulted in earthquakes. Rum then created the great mountains of the earth, the chief of which is King-tzum-song-bu; then four more peaks, Pŏn-dām, Pŏn-tzum-dju, Pŏn-tzum-tang-rem-dju, Don-dong-tang-nyik-dju. Another story records that two chief mountains were created, *viz.*, the Kang-chen and the Kang-lo. Another Mun makes a contrary statement, "The snow-capped mountain Kang-chen-rum was created first and as a companion to it, Nyo-ling-rum, the goddess of the great ocean was created." In some versions of this story the goddess is named Lyang-ser-

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from beyond the snows, but they have connected the incidents with their present place of residence. There is a hill visible from Darjeeling, which, as the tale hath it, when all the country was under water, arose and supported a ship containing a few persons, all other people being drowned. The hill rose up like a horn, (hence the name a-róng, a horn,) and afterwards subsided to its present form. It is known to the Europeans as the Camel's back. On the top of the lofty Sung-lilho, it is said, a foolish class of Lepchas—(the na-óng) now extinct,—endeavoured to raise a building high enough to reach the heavens. Rock and blocks of stone, as the ruins, are shown on the place."[47] We ourselves heard this saga of the tower and its ruins, in Darjeeling. In Git-biyong, we heard the following version of this saga, "The Lepchas filled a great many pitchers with earth, and piled them higher and higher over each other in an effort to reach the heavens. The man on the top reached so high that with the aid of a long hook he fancied he could link earth with heaven. Whereupon he shouted to the people beneath him, 'Quick! Pass a hook on to me.' It must be noted that in the Lepcha language the word for 'hook' and for 'cut off' have an identical pronunciation. The people yelled, 'Why cut off?' From above sounded the urgent answer, 'Quick, the hook.' They understood it to be, 'Quick, cut off!' So they cut off the rope and their tower came crumbling to the ground."

Here is another version of the story, "When (after the flood) the world was full of people once more, a tribe called the Na-ong, or 'Ignorant persons' prepared to ascend to the Rum country, and they began to build a tower of earthen pots. They piled them so high that the Rum country was only one pole away. The creator thought they were becoming too eager and too zealous, and that it was not good for them.

So he thought he would create confusion, and make them all speak in different tongues, so that they would misunderstand one another. The man at the top shouted, 'Kok vim yang tale' (hand up the pole with the hook,) while the men at the bottom heard the words, 'Chek tala' (cut it

47. G. B. Mainwaring, A grammar of the Róng (Lepcha) Language, Calcutta, 1876, p. XX.

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773 173 down). They wondering greatly shouted up to ask the man at the top whether he really meant it. This time they heard the words 'ak, ak' (yes, yes). And they at once cut the tower down, which falling, killed many of the Na-ong, and those that remained had to separate on account of their not being able to understand one another. And even today broken earthern pots are to be found on that plain which is called Dalon-partan."[48] And so we see that the Lepchas also possess myths pertaining to the flood, to the building of the tower and the babel of tongues in common with so many other South Asian peoples, *e.g.* the Miau, the Lolo, the Thai, the Mikmir and many others.

(*d*) The Land of the Gods and Spirits

772 77K The myth describing the building of the tower demonstrates the effort made by the Lepchas to reach Rum-lyang, the land of the gods. The Lepchas are of the opinion that this land lies in the region of the heavens. From this land Rum is supposed to look down to earth. From there too, gods and spirits come down to the land of men, or they send messengers and strange powers in the form of thunderbolts to bring about strange births on earth.[49] On the other hand heroes, and the steeds on which they ride may occasionally fly up to heaven before actual dying. These are the same mythical motifs that are common among the Tibetans.[50]

The ancestral spirits, who, as we saw above, are in Mayal, are sometimes said to be in Rum-lyang. We shall probe into this question more deeply, when we treat about the cult of death.

According to other Lepchas, the land of the gods does not lie above, in the region of the heavens but below. Consequently they call this region "Dhing-song-rum." "Dhing-song" means below. The Kalimpong native on whose authority we have sometimes relied, indulges in the following line of reasoning, "The seed must fall down into the earth before it can spring forth and bear fruit. When it has ripened

48. Stocks, op. cit. p. 389 sq.
49. Stocks, op. cit. p. 336 sq.
50. op. cit. p. 337.

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illness which is hereditary in the family. Numerous examples prove that the Shaman disposition does in fact appear as a kind of illness."[105]

Our own studies have brought to light the existence of similar dispositions among the Rong. In both places there is the same conception of the spirits of Shaman. These spirits sometimes take the form of animals, *e.g.*, that of a bull. "His bull-form walks abroad, is also said by the forest Juraks, when the soul of a Shaman has departed to another world."[106] They also bring the deceased into the kingdom of the dead.[107] All these facts run a close parallel to our findings among the Rong and other primitive hunter tribes in India.

Further similarities are found in the mode of consecration and instruction. The Shaman costume however is fundamentally different. The Rong have no special costume, while among the different Siberian peoples, a wide variety of customs are worn.

(*k*) The Social Classes of the Rong.

According to the general tradition existent among the Rong, they claim to have been originally a race of hunters, and that in the very early times before the Tibetans, the Bhutanese and the Nepalese had infiltrated into their country, they lived as the free rulers of the immese forests which were their home. The Lepchas have a clear knowledge of the animals, the birds, the plants, the fruits and the roots, and can tell which are poisonous and which are edible. Even today the Lepcha will not starve if the harvest fails, for he will procure as his sustenance the edible leaves, fruits and roots from the forest. One such root is the dayout-buck. After being dug up it is broken into small pieces and soaked in water for three days to remove the poison and clear off the lye. A ferment is then added and a kind of beer produced. Another root is the dog-bo or bok-yik. It is cut up, the lye cleared, and then it is cooked and crushed. The broth is eaten like rice. This is of a pale violet colour.

105. op. cit. p. 483.
106. op. cit. p. 478.
107. op. cit. p. 478.